

Global Seminar: Rural Sustainability

Syllabus Fall 2009

Introduction

What is the *Global Seminar*? Broadly it is a learning community comprised of students and faculty from around the world who study key global issues of Sustainability pertaining to the environment and food systems. The goal of the Global Seminar is to prepare future leaders and citizens of the global community to articulate policy agendas that will lead to a sustainable environment and a stable food supply. It is believed that the shared understandings that transcend national boundaries, cultures, and backgrounds offer the best hope for our future safety and security. (Stuphin, 2003)

The first week of each case presentation will be devoted to local study and discussion of the case. During the second week there will be an online discussion (asynchronous) with all partners through WebCT. In the third week each local group will prepare for the video conference (synchronous). The video conference component of the course will be designed as a role-play exercise where each university will have a specific role to play. The roles and discussions should be rehearsed before the seminar. At the end of each Case Study the student will complete an individual reflective writing summarizing the learning and experience of the case. The final 'exam' is a Public Seminar or Research Paper that must have an international scope and reflect one of the case topics. Students located remotely from the college may develop a Web page for public posting or a PowerPoint presentation that can be presented remotely. The course will be available in both English and Spanish where students will opt to take the course in one language or the other; but where language ability exists students may interact in both languages.

Course Description

Global Seminar, Rural Sustainability is an international course which brings together students from around the world to investigate and discuss local and global issues. The course will consist of a number of case studies, and the students must choose four in which to participate. Students will work in groups to research the topic using email and discussion forums, and present their findings to the class using electronic classroom technology. Together the students will participate in a truly global seminar course.

Evaluation

Per Case Study:

Week 1 - 4

Week 2 - 4

Week 3* - 8

Reflective Writing - 4

Total per Case Study (20x4) 80

Final Assignment** 20

Total 100

*Includes video conference

** Must be completed by end of Final Exam week.

Note that students taking this course by distance must have access to a Webcam and microphone for participation in the on-line audio and video portion of the course. Normally, we will meet in Professor Flora's office and use her webcam.

Schedule

The course is available in English and Spanish. The distance portion of the course takes place every three weeks – September 28, October 19, November 2, and November 30. The time for the English language section is Wednesday 1:00 PM Central Time, and the time for the Spanish language section is Thursday 1:00 PM Central Time. We will decide if the other meeting times should be at that time or it can be arranged..

The Cases

Case 1 – Water Use Management on the Colorado River, Baja California, Mexico

- Jesús Román Calleros and Leonel Avendaño, UABC, MX

Heads of state of many countries all over the world have declared that one of their main problems is water availability and supply for their people. As a matter of fact, it has been estimated that in the last twenty years the available amounts of water for human consumption has been reduced dramatically, while the management and administration costs have been increasing. In Mexico, irrigation districts are the main source of food and raw material for the agri-food industry, reporting three times the production obtained in other agricultural areas. This case study examines the challenges with water use management in Irrigation District #014 of the Colorado River, Mexicali Valley

Case 2 - Sustainability of Biofuels

- Greg Welbaum, VT, USA; Cornelia Flora, ISU, USA

Just a year ago, ethanol was the renewable fuel of the moment. Derived mostly from corn grown in America's heartland, ethanol was promoted as a home-grown ticket to energy independence for the U.S. and other oil-importing nations. It played a feature role in the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) of 2007, passed by the U.S. Congress in December, which called for a five-fold increase in ethanol production by 2022 and provided tax incentives and grants to ethanol producers. Today, however, ethanol's prospects look somewhat cloudy. Critics around the world are crying foul over rising food prices. Others contend that it takes more resources to create ethanol than the alternative fuel provides. According to experts, ethanol underscores the hazards involved in the development of any new energy source, where failure to understand the broader impact of production can result in unintended consequences.

Case 3 - Agriculture - Aquaculture: Integrated Farming

- Laura Halfyard, Kelly Moret, Keith Rideout and Norman Goodyear, MI/NSAC, CA

This case study examines the parallels, intersections and overlap of agriculture and aquaculture farming in the rural community. The Marine Institute (MI) and the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC) have drawn on their experiences in the rural areas of Vietnam, Cambodia, Colombia and Malawi to develop the resources that will be utilized. After completing the case the student will have a greater appreciation of integrated farming for sustainability, the importance of 'cross-training' between agriculture - aquaculture, and the importance to the rural economy and social structure. Importantly, aquaculture and agriculture students will have developed a common language through which to communicate.

Case 4 – Agroforestry - The Uruguayan Experience

- Norman Goodyear and Marta Chiappe, NSAC, CA/UDELAR UY

The development of afforestation in Uruguay can be divided into two great historical moments. The first stage is tied to the first law promoting afforestation, law N/ 13,723 of 1968. The second or contemporary stage as tied to the second afforestation law, law N/ 15,939 of year 1987. The first stage of the forest development had as its objectives to supply the internal demand, mainly of wood for combustible use, the protective function of crops, soils and water, and the use of the forest for recreation and tourism. The second law of forest promotion had as its objective the promotion of artificial plantations for industrial use (fundamentally for the cellulose industry - pulp) and the protection of the native forests. The new policy acted as an incentive for foreign and domestic investments extra-sectorial (non agricultural), which with diverse forms and different objectives were to define and characterize the country's new forest stage.

Global Seminar Schedule Fall 2009

Case 1 - Water Use Management on the Colorado River, Baja California, Mexico

[Host Institution: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC), MX]

Week 1 - Sept 14

Week 2 - Sept 21
Week 3 - Sept 28

Case 2 – Biofuels: Ethanol Promises [Host Institution: Virginia Tech (VT), USA]

Week 1 - Oct 5
Week 2 - Oct 12/13 (Oct 12 – Thanksgiving Day Canada)
Week 3 - Oct 19

Case 3 - Agriculture – Aquaculture: Integrated Farming [Host Institutions: Marine Institute (MI)/Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC), CA]

Week 1 - Oct 26
Week 2 - Nov 2
Week 3 - Nov 9

Case 4 - Agroforestry - The Uruguayan Experience [Host Institutions: NSAC/Universidad de la Republica (UdelaR), UR]

Week 1 - Nov 9
Week 2 - Nov 16
Week 3 – Nov 30

The structure of each Case presentation is such that Week 1 is the week of local activities at each institution; Week 2 is full discussion (asynchronous) involving students at all participating institutions using the Discussion Forum on WebCT; Week 3 indicates the week during which there will be the live video conference (synchronous) using the Centra system.

Virginia Tech using their Centra System will host the live Video Conference. The conference dates are as follows: Case 1 – Wednesday Sept 30/Thursday Oct 1, Case 2 – Wednesday Oct 21/Thursday Oct 22; Case 3 – *Tuesday Nov 10/Thursday Nov 12*, and Case 4 – Wednesday Dec 2/Thursday Dec 3. The conference held on Wednesday (Tuesday) will be in English, and the one held on Thursday will be in Spanish. On both days, the Video Conference will begin at 1:00 PM Central time (3:00 PM Atlantic time).

Special considerations. The Canadian semester appears to be the shortest, beginning only after the North American celebration of Labour Day. In Canada November 11, Remembrance Day, is always a holiday on the day that it falls during the week, a Monday if it falls on the weekend. This year November 11 is on Wednesday, this means the English Video Conference will be held on Tuesday November 10 for that week only. The week of November 23 is US Thanksgiving and there will be no classes. Therefore Week 1 of Case 4 and Week 3 of Case 3 overlap, this is to ensure that the cases have been finished before the start of the Canadian student's exam period. All instructors will have a live virtual meeting (video conference) on Wednesday September 23 (English) and Thursday September 24 (Spanish), if needed.